J. MICHAEL MOORE

THAT DAM FAILURE

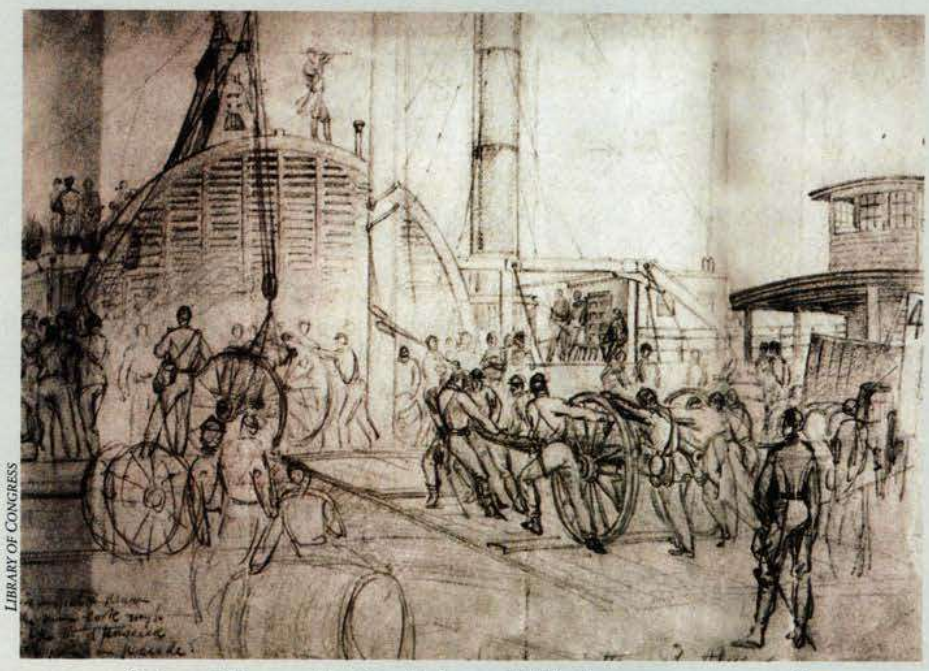
The Battles of Lee's Mill and Dam No. 1

In March 1862 the Union Army of the Potomac landed on the tip of the Virginia Peninsula at Fort Monroe, with the objective of capturing Richmond, the Confederate capital. A flotilla of over four hundred ships transported 121,500 troops, 101 heavy siege guns, 44 field artillery batteries, 14,592 animals, 1,150 wagons, and other equipage for this massive operation, the largest American amphibious landing prior to World War II.[1] One participant, First Lieutenant David F. Ritchie of the 1st New York Light Artillery, noted:

> **We reached Fortress Monroe and very soon were safe under her guns. Fortress Monroe is the receptacle of large numbers of troops and immense war armaments. This is no disclosure of army movements. Two hundred thousand men make too large an army to skirmish with and can only prove effective by being used as a gigantic battering ram.[2]**

Ayres' battery crossing Dam No. 1 after the Confederate withdrawal in May 1862.
Photograph courtesy Vermont Historical Society.

Major General George Brinton McClellan, commander of the invading army, had graduated second in the 1846 class at West Point and served as an engineer officer in the regular army. In 1855-1856, McClellan was the junior member of the Delafield Commission which toured Europe to study foreign military developments and observe the Crimean War. The devastation of the Russian city of Sevastopol wrought by British and French cannons provided McClellan with a good example of the power of siege artillery; the thousands of Allied and Russian graves impressed the young officer with the folly of frontal attacks against fixed positions. Years later McClellan designed his Peninsula Campaign to outflank the Confederate forces in northern Virginia, and move up the James and York Rivers toward Richmond before reinforcements could reach the city. Thus, he could avoid the heavy casualties consequent upon a direct attack, and capture Richmond by maneuver.



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Union soldiers manhandle a limber and field piece on to a transport for shipment to the Peninsula.

To defend the Peninsula Major General John Bankhead Magruder had only thirteen thousand troops, with little artillery support. McClellan's advance, however, was hindered by the lack of naval support. The clash between the CSS *Virginia* and USS *Monitor* on March 9 revolutionized naval warfare. Both ironclads survived the battle, and the *Virginia* constituted a continuing threat to the wooden ships of the Union fleet. Union access to the James River was blocked, and Commodore Louis Goldsborough was unwilling to commit his fleet against the Confederate batteries along the York River at Yorktown and Gloucester Point. Lacking naval support, McClellan mounted an overland campaign over unfamiliar terrain.

The terrain was not merely unfamiliar, it was also largely unmapped. The map upon which McClellan relied was based upon one drawn up by the French in 1781. It incorrectly showed the Warwick River running parallel to the James, and this caused McClellan's plans to go awry. McClellan later complained, "correct local maps were not to be found, and the country, though known in its general features, we found to be inaccurately described . . . and no dependence could be placed on the information thus derived."[3] McClellan's greatest handicap, however, was his own innate, almost pathological, caution.

On April 4 the Army of the Potomac moved up the Peninsula toward the Confederates in two columns. Brigadier General Samuel Peter Heintzelman's III Corps, with Brigadier General Edwin Vose Sumner's II Corps in support, marched from Fort Monroe up the Hampton-Yorktown Highway toward the Yorktown defenses. Simultaneously, Brigadier General Erasmus Darwin Keyes' IV Corps advanced up the Great Warwick Road from Camp Butler at Newport News Point toward the Halfway House between Yorktown and Williamsburg. General McClellan's intelligence sources believed that General Magruder's forces were in Yorktown with their right flank vulnerable, and he planned to trap his enemy by means of a two-pronged maneuver.

The Confederate Army of the Peninsula, however, was entrenched behind three lines of defenses, with the Warwick River blocking the path of the IV Corps. For almost a year, Confederate troops and local slaves had constructed redoubts, redans, and rifle pits across the Peninsula to repel any Union attack. The Confederate first defensive line stretched from Young's Mill on Deep Creek across the Peninsula to Ship's Point on the Poquoson River. This position was vulnerable on the flanks to amphibious assault, and Magruder ordered it abandoned once the Union army advanced in force. The second line stretched from Mulberry Island, following the swampy Warwick River to within one mile of Yorktown, and linked with the fortifications around the old colonial port. This was the strongest line, its flanks anchored by batteries at Gloucester Point and Yorktown along the York River and Fort Crafford and Fort Boykins along the James River. The third line consisted of fourteen redoubts between College and Queen's Creeks. The Confederates further strengthened their position by damming the Warwick River, to create an almost impassable barrier.

Describing the Warwick-Yorktown line in his official report, Magruder stated:

> Along this river are five dams. The effect of these dams are [*sic*] to back up the water along the course of the river, so that for nearly three-fourths its distance its passage is impracticable for either artillery or infantry. Each of these dams is protected by artillery and extensive earthworks for infantry.[4]

Magruder bombarded the War Department with endless telegrams and reports pleading for reinforcements, cannons, and supplies. In response General Robert E. Lee wrote, "Your several telegrams of yesterday and previous dates were received. It is unnecessary for you to repeat in detail such dispatches." Lee further cautioned Magruder that "no secrecy, either as to your movements or views, can be maintained if you make them the subject of telegraphic dis-

patches."[5] Magruder, concerned about the large army to his front, continued his flood of dispatches and stated, "If I am re-enforced in time with 10,000 men I can block the way to Richmond." The wet weather, however, proved as much an obstacle to McClellan as the Confederate defenses.

April 4 dawned warm and sunny, and the two Union columns advanced. Private Robert Knox Sneden described the condition of the Hampton-Yorktown Highway: "The pools of water from the recent rain storm had settled in the narrow road and overspread it on both sides for hundreds of feet.... The roads grew worse and worse for the center of the advancing column as they were cut up by the hundreds of wagons and artillery ahead of us. The mules balked and tried to lay down in the road."[6] On the Union left flank, Private David P. Bent of the 4th Vermont Infantry noted: "[T]he roads are so bad that it is slow getting the artillery along they have cut logs and put them in for about ten or fifteen miles which makes a good road for somebody when the war is over."[7]

General Heintzelman's III Corps moved out at 5:00 a.m. and reached Howard's Bridge along the Poquoson River by 5:00 p.m. There, Confederate skirmishers supported by two field pieces fired upon the Union troops, but were driven off by accurate artillery fire. By nightfall, the III Corps was encamped at Howard's Bridge and Cockletown. On the left flank, General Keyes's IV Corps moved out at 6:00 a.m., with Brigadier General William Farrar Smith's division in the advance. Smith's skirmishers encountered Confederate pickets at Water's Creek, and drove off the remaining troops at Young's Mill. The IV Corps encamped at Young's Mill and prepared to advance toward the Halfway House the next morning.

After withdrawing from the first line of defense, General Magruder's 13,000 troops halted the Union advance along the Warwick-Yorktown line on April 5. Around 7:00 a.m. it began to rain, and both armies were quickly soaked. The III Corps moved toward the Confederate defenses at Yorktown, and encountered heavy artillery fire just past the junction of the Warwick Courthouse Road and the Hampton-Yorktown Highway. Brigadier General Fitz John Porter's division deployed along the front and held its

ground. The III Corps reached its objective and awaited the IV Corps' flanking maneuver behind General Magruder's army. Keyes' corps advanced from Young's Mill along the Great Warwick Road through Warwick Courthouse in heavy rain, which made the roads almost impassable. Early in the afternoon, General Smith's division met unexpected resistance along the Warwick River at Lee's Mill and failed to reach their objective at the Halfway House.

The subsequent Battle of Lee's Mill prevented McClellan from outflanking Magruder and demonstrated the inadequacy of Union intelligence. Unbeknown to the Union commander, the Great Warwick Road crossed the Warwick River at Lee's Mill. This strong position was defended by a brigade of Brigadier General Lafayette McLaws' division, and Captain Joseph Cosnahan's Peninsula Artillery emplaced in three redans. General Smith's division again led the IV Corps with Brigadier General John Wynn Davidson's brigade in advance. As the Union troops approached Lee's Mill, they received artillery fire from their left, and, Smith reported, "flames appeared on all sides." Lieutenant Colonel John Weems marched four companies of the 10th Georgia Infantry across the river and skirmished with Davidson's brigade. General Magruder observed the advancing Union troops and bolstered McLaws' brigade with the 13th and 14th North Carolina Infantry Regiments. Captain Cosnahan's two cannons emplaced in a redan on the extreme right dueled with Captain Charles Wheeler's Battery E, 1st New York Light Artillery, and forced their withdrawal. Facing formidable fortifications and artillery fire, General Smith deployed Davidson's brigade behind the woods along the front, with Brigadier General William Thomas Harbaugh Brooks' Vermont brigade in support. On the right flank, Brigadier General Winfield Scott Hancock's brigade guarded against a possible attack. With his advance blocked, General Keyes reported, "I am stopped by the enemy's works at Lee's Mill, which offer severe resistance. . . . [The] Warwick River is nowhere fordable, having been dammed up in several places. . . ." The skirmish of Lee's Mill cost the Confederates seven casualties and the Union twelve.[8]

On April 6 Hancock's brigade reconnoitered along the Warwick toward Yorktown, skirmishing with Confederate pickets along the river and capturing a signalman at Dam No. 1. As Hancock's men linked with elements of the III Corps at the dam, McClellan and Brigadier General John Gross Barnard, chief engineer of the Army of the Potomac, scouted the Warwick-Yorktown line. "Our reconnaissance of yesterday," McClellan reported, "shows the strength of the enemy's positions. The Warwick River grows worse the more you look at it."[9] President Abraham Lincoln sought to motivate McClellan, stating: "I think you better break the enemy's line from Yorktown to Warwick River at once. [They] will probably use time as advantageously as you can."[10] Meanwhile, General Magruder instituted an elaborate ruse.

As McClellan and other Union officers studied the Confederate defenses, Magruder marched his troops back and forth to create the illusion that he was being heavily reinforced. Private Edmund DeWitt Patterson of the 9th Alabama Infantry noted, "This morning we were called out . . . and have been travelling most of the day, seemingly with no other view than to show ourselves to the enemy at as many different points of the line as possible."[11] Southern diarist Mary Chesnut commented, "It was a wonderful thing how [Magruder] paraded his ten thousand before McClellan like fireflies and utterly deluded him." Meanwhile, the Confederate batteries rained shot and shell over the Union encampments. Robert Sneden described one bombardment:

> About 2 p.m., they opened seven or eight guns and shelled our whole line from right of it to centre[.] A 62 pounder struck near General Birney's tent and plunged into the earth five feet. . . . The bombardment continued from 2

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p.m. to 6:30 p.m. All their shot seemed to fall within 100 feet of our front lines. . . . There was enough old iron piled up and laying around in the open to gladden the heart of any junk peddler. No one was hurt.[12]

Quite apart from Magruder's theatricals, other factors reinforced McClellan's native caution. Not only had he lost the active cooperation of the navy, but his plan to outflank the Confederate defenses by means of an amphibious landing at Gloucester Point was thwarted when President Lincoln withheld Irwin McDowell's 40,000 strong I Corps to defend Washington. McClellan also grossly overestimated—as was his wont—the overall size of Confederate forces in Virginia. In combination, these factors caused him to commit to a formal siege rather than to a swift attack.

During the siege from April 5 to May 3, 1862, Union engineers laid out fifteen separate batteries for the heavy artillery. The Army of the Potomac had 101 siege cannons (including 100 and 200-pound Parrott rifles; 8, 10, and 13-inch siege mortars; 20 and 30-pound Parrott rifles; and 4.5-inch rifled guns) that were capable of hurling projectiles over two thousand yards. The erection of the siege batteries and parallels was hazardous and dirty work. Major Charles S. Wainwright of the 1st New York Artillery noted, "We have entire possession of the peach orchard there now, the parallel is running along the front of it. The rebs make it a pretty hot place still, and one is obliged, by day, to keep down in the covered approaches."[13] In a letter to his sister Amanda, Corporal Andrew J. Lawrence of the 3rd Vermont described digging earthworks: "We build our Forts and rifle pits in the night. . . . [W]e have to keep very still, can't speak a word but they always find us out and fire at us so we have a man to watch the same as crows do when they are eating some old dead sheep."[14]

Despite McClellan's commitment to a siege, other Union commanders found a weak point in the center of the Warwick-Yorktown line, at Dam No. 1. On April 6 Hancock's brigade scouted from Lee's Mill toward the dam. General Hancock described the Confederate position there to General Smith:

> The banks of the stream on the other side appear generally to be higher than on this side. In one case, however, at some chimneys in an open field the ground is higher than their batteries on the opposite, mounting one gun, but there are evidences of another work behind this, sheltered by the woods, and there are appearances of ranges being cut in the woods and two guns there.[15]

Magruder recognized that Dam No. 1 was a weak point and kept work parties busy preparing an intricate line of rifle pits and redans. The Confederates had sited a 12-pound howitzer under the command of Captain James Jordan to defend the dam. In addition, the Troup Artillery of Cobb's Legion under Captain Marcellus Stanley had a 6-pound smoothbore and a 12-pound howitzer situated in two redans behind the dam. The 2nd Louisiana and 15th North Carolina Infantry Regiments of Brigadier General Howell Cobb's brigade were deployed on either side of the dam. The Confederates had also cleared the bank of trees, and used them to create underwater obstacles in the river. By April 11 Smith's three brigades were opposite Dam No. 1, in the woods behind the Garrow's Farm. Merry Oaks, the Garrow's house, had been burned by the retreating Confederates, and only the stark chimneys remained. The ensuing battle was later called "Burnt Chimneys" by the Union. Smith sought McClellan's permission to attack the Confederate one-gun battery guarding the dam, and on the evening of the 15th, McClellan inspected Smith's division and directed him to "drive the enemy from the works they are erecting in the vicinity of the one-gun battery."[16] This was the only time during the siege that McClellan committed troops to offensive action.

At 6:00 a.m. Brooks' Vermont brigade, with Captain Thaddeus Mott's 3rd New York Battery in support, advanced from the woods toward the field at Garrow's Farm. Hancock's brigade, with Captain Romeyn Ayres' Battery F, 5th U.S. Artillery, and Captain Charles Wheeler's Battery E, 1st New York Light Artillery, supported the Vermont brigade and guarded the Warwick Courthouse Road. Davidson's brigade, with Captain Terence Kennedy's 1st New York Battery, was posted one mile in the rear at the Four Corners.

The five regiments of the Vermont brigade followed the Garrow Ford Road toward the dam. With the balance of the brigade near Burnt Chimneys, Colonel Breed N. Hyde's 3rd Vermont moved to the left of the dam, and Colonel Edwin Stoughton's 4th Vermont deployed to the right, in the woods. The skirmishers of the two regiments fired at the Confederates digging earthworks, and the Confederate artillery returned their fire with shot and shell, causing the Vermonters to take shelter behind logs and stumps. One round hit the top of a pine tree and covered the surgeon and chaplain of the 4th with splinters.

While the 3rd and 4th Vermont continued blazing away, Captain Mott's 3rd New York Battery opened up on the one-gun battery. The Confederates had only three cannons to counter the Union barrage, and two of these were not properly positioned for counter-battery fire. Captain James Jordan's 12-pound howitzer guarding the dam had a very limited command of the opposite bank, and fired

Opposite: George B. McClellan (left) intended to outflank Joe Johnston's army in northern Virginia and strike swiftly at Richmond. The Union commander's decision to lay siege to the Warwick-Yorktown line, however, negated his original intention.

John Bankhead Magruder (right), whose theatricals caused McClellan to believe he faced many more than 13,000 troops.

Left: George B. McClellan and his senior officers pose for the camera prior to the Peninsula Campaign. From left to right: William F. Smith, William B. Franklin, Samuel P. Heintzelman, Andrew Porter, Irvin McDowell, George B. McClellan, George A. McCall, Don Carlos Buell, Louis Blenker, Silas Casey, and Fitz John Porter.

only a few rounds before it was damaged and replaced with a quaker gun. Stanley's Troup Artillery dared not fire their howitzer for fear of injuring the infantry below in the rifle pits. However, the 6-pound smoothbore commanded by Lieutenant Alexander Pope disabled one of Mott's 10-pound Parrott rifles before the artillery duel ended around 11:00 a.m., the Confederates having abandoned their forward works. Mott's battery, containing two 12-pound Napoleon smoothbores and four 10-pound Parrott rifles, fired 747 rounds and suffered ten casualties during the battle.

General Brooks gave Corporal Alonzo Hutchinson a white handkerchief with which to signal for reinforcements. Around 3:00 p.m., under covering fire from Ayres' artillery, the Green Mountain boys waded into the Warwick with their rifles and cartridge boxes held high. Amid a hail of bullets the Vermonters stumbled over the obstructions, dunking their rifles and cartridges. In the words of Private John Brown Pollard of the 2nd Vermont:

> Between us and the rebels there was a low swamp about 50 yards wide which they had rendered almost impassable by digging ditches, felling trees and to make it still worse they had a dam above, which they could drain at pleasure and flood the whole swamp.[17]

The Vermonters pressed onward, dragging their wounded onto the bank, and charged and captured the Confederate rifle pits. General McClellan reported that "their conduct was worthy of veterans." Pickets from the 15th North Carolina fell back, but their commanding officer, Colonel Robert M. McKinney, stopped them from digging in alongside the 6-pound gun, and instead ordered a charge. When McKinney fell with a bullet in the forehead, the counterattack faltered, and then collapsed. The Vermont troops had breached the Warwick-Yorktown line, but they occupied a precarious position, with wet ammunition and no sign of reinforcements.

Corporal Hutchinson had been mortally wounded while crossing the river, and died without signaling for support. Twice, messengers were sent to Colonel Hyde asking for reinforcements, and men also shouted back across the Warwick, but their entreaties fell upon deaf ears. The Union commanders failed to exploit the breach in the Confederate lines. It was about this time that General Smith fell off his horse twice and was knocked unconscious; he was later accused of being drunk on duty. Captain Harrington, supposedly commanding the attack, was missing and did not cross the river. Command of the attack therefore fell to Captain Samuel Pingree of Company F.

After the repulse of the 15th North Carolina, Howell Cobb rallied the troops and held the line, plugging the gap with the 11th and 16th Georgia, while Colonel William Levy's 2nd Louisiana held its ground behind the dam. Brigadier General Lafayette McLaws maneuvered his troops so as to seal off the breach, and stave off a general retreat. McLaws also reinforced the defenders of Lee's Mill, four miles down stream, where he feared the Union forces might strike another blow. Finally, Captain Thomas Jefferson Page's Magruder Light Artillery and Captain William P. Palmer's howitzers arrived on the battlefield and added their fire to the fray.

Their forces deployed, McLaws and Cobb quickly organized a counterattack in which the 7th Georgia, followed by the 16th, charged straight into the Vermonters, while the 8th Georgia and the 2nd Louisiana attacked their flanks. This was the first battle for most of Cobb's brigade. Private E.P. Landers of the 16th Georgia wrote his mother after the battle:

> We were about half a mile from the line when the firing commenced. We all went in double quick to the rescue of our brothers and when we got there the enemy was nearly to our breastworks, in fact they had part of them in possession and we

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Eyewitness sketch of the Battle of Dam No. 1.

McClellan, accompanied by the Prince de Joinville, the Comte de Paris, and other members of his staff, arrived at Dam No. 1 around noon. First Lieutenant Edwin M. Noyes of General Brooks' staff reported to the commanding general that he had crossed the river and gotten within fifty yards of the Confederate lines. Noyes observed wagons moving material from the Confederate lines, and noted that the rifle pits along the Warwick had been abandoned. McClellan therefore gave Smith permission to cross the river and capture the earthworks.

Smith planned to overwhelm the Confederates with a combination of artillery and infantry. Captain Ayres, commanding the divisional artillery, placed eighteen cannons in Garrow's field, within five hundred yards of the Confederate works. The entire Vermont brigade was now deployed along the river, with Hancock's brigade in support. The 3rd Vermont was chosen to spearhead the attack. Hyde selected Companies D, F, E, and K, totalling 192 men under the command of Captain Fernando Harrington, to cross the river. Before their departure,

run in an open fire on them. We did not have time to organize our regiment. We just run in and shot when we had the chance and never formed no line. Some of the boys never fired a gun. Some lay behind logs as close to the ground as young rabbits till the battle was over. It did not frighten me as bad as I expected it would but I tell you when the bullets would whistle around my head I felt sort of ticklish.[18]

Private John Pollard, who witnessed the attack from the opposite bank, noted that "the rebels poured in so hot a fire that no living soldier could stand it and were obliged to recross the swamp under a most galling fire of infantry and artillery." Pingree's little command was driven back into the river, and Pingree himself was seriously wounded. Cobb's brigade occupied the recaptured rifle pits and prepared to meet another Union attack. The four companies of the 3rd Vermont had suffered eighty-three casualties in their one-hour occupation of the Confederate works.

Brigadier General William Smith, once again lucid after his fall, planned another attack. At 5:00 p.m. the Union cannons hurled shot and shell into the Confederate works. Smith ordered four companies of Colonel Edwin Stoughton's 4th Vermont Infantry to cross the dam, and four companies of Colonel Nathan Lord's 6th Vermont to recapture the rifle pits. However, General McLaws' entire division was now present, and meeting fierce artillery and musket fire, both commanders realized the futility of continuing the advance, and withdrew. Darkness prevented another assault.

The Battle of Dam No. 1 resulted in 165 Union and about ninety Confederate casualties. The bandsmen of the 3rd Vermont worked throughout the night removing their dead and wounded, but Union corpses floating in the river and lying on the Confederate side became blackened and swollen after several days. Colonel Levy walked across the dam under a white flag, met Captain Currie of General Brooks' staff, and offered a temporary truce for the recovery of the dead. He paid Currie and the Vermont brigade a compliment: "It was lucky for us that you did not send over many such detachments."[19] As Corporal Andrew Lawrence of the 3rd Vermont stated: "The Vermont boys showed the world on the 16th that the old spirit of Ethan Allan still lives."

Left: William Thomas Harbaugh Brooks. Below: General Smith (seated second from left) and staff. Captain Ayres is seated on Smith's right.

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Two members of the regiment received the Medal of Honor for their bravery on April 16. Captain Pingree, while serving as governor of Vermont, received the medal in 1891. Despite having his right thumb shot off and being wounded in the hip, Pingree rallied his men against the Confederate counteroffensive and provided important leadership once Captain Harrington was found to be absent from the field. Pingree was evacuated from the Peninsula to a Philadelphia hospital, where he contracted typhoid pneumonia. He survived this life-threatening illness and returned to duty, eventually reaching the rank of lieutenant colonel. The other awardee was Private Julian Scott, who received the medal in February 1865. Scott, who was not yet sixteen years old at the time of the battle, crossed the river several times under fire to remove at least nine wounded comrades. He later remarked that the Confederate fire was "just like sap-boiling, in that stream, the bullets fell so thick." Scott subsequently enjoyed a career as an artist, and painted many battle scenes that he witnessed during the Civil War.[20]

One noted Union casualty was Private William Scott, the "sleeping sentinel," who died of his wounds on April 16. On August 31, 1861, William Scott (no relation to Julian) had fallen asleep on sentry duty at the Chain Bridge in Washington, D.C. He was the first Union soldier convicted of this serious offense in the Army of the Potomac, and the military leaders wanted to make an example of him. On September 3, 1861, Scott was sentenced to death by a firing squad. The Vermont troops, however, petitioned for his pardon and argued that Scott was a farmer and not a professional soldier. In addition, General Brooks, Colonel Hyde, and the officers of the 3rd Vermont asked General McClellan to spare Scott's life. News of Scott's pending execution spread throughout the North, and he was pardoned by Abraham Lincoln. The grateful young private exclaimed that "I will show President Lincoln that I am not afraid to die for my country." Eight months later, Scott was shot five times while charging the Confederate works, and reportedly prayed for the president as his life ebbed away.

Despite the bravery of the Vermonters, the breach of the Warwick-Yorktown line at the Battle of Dam No. 1 proved a lost opportunity for McClellan's army. There was a total breakdown in the Union command structure. Pingree sent messengers to Colonel Hyde for reinforcements, and the men shouted and frantically waved handkerchiefs to signal the capture of the Confederate works. At least four generals and the colonel of the 3rd Vermont were present, but no one committed troops to reinforce the breakthrough. Neither McClellan nor Smith, nor the brigade or regimental commanders, acted. Afterward the senior commanders claimed that the Confederates had prevented reinforcements from being sent, by raising the level of the river. This, however, would have been impossible without destroying the dam.

The lethargy of the Union high command did not escape the notice of Congressional leaders. Congressman Justin Morill of Vermont denounced General Smith and accused him of being drunk during the battle. Brigadier General Erasmus Keyes and the Vermont brigade officers defended Smith against these accusations, and Smith requested an inquiry. It sat for only one day, and cleared him. Smith continued as a division commander in the Army of the Potomac until reassignment in 1863, and later served as the chief engineer of the Army of the Cumberland, and commander of the XVIII Corps of the Army of the James.

In contrast to their Union counterparts, the Confederate commanders reacted swiftly at Dam No. 1. Magruder commended McLaws for his defense of the one-gun battery and deployment of troops. Magruder also praised the Georgia political general who rallied his brigade after its repulse by the 3rd Vermont:

> Brigadier General [Howell] Cobb, commanding at this point, exhibited throughout the day the greatest courage and skill, and when, once at a critical moment, some troops of his line of battle wavered, he personally rallied the troops under a terrible fire, and by his voice and example entirely re-established their steadiness.[21]

After the Battle of Dam No. 1, Magruder received more reinforcements, but was superseded by General Joseph Eggleston Johnston, who now commanded the Departments of the Peninsula and Norfolk. Johnston, an 1829 graduate of West Point and the former quartermaster general of the U.S. Army, was the fourth highest ranking officer in the Confederate army. By late April, Johnston had brought down the divisions of Major Generals James Longstreet, Gustavus Woodson Smith, and Daniel Harvey Hill. Magruder was placed in command of the right wing of the army. General McLaws wrote to his wife on April 23:

> Our troops are in good spirits and it is the wish of all, officers and men, that a grand battle should be fought on the Peninsula, as it is our conviction it would result gloriously to our arms. The Confederacy never had a better nor a larger army concentrated than the one we now have, and the country is of such a character that our force is as formidable as the greatest number the enemy can bring to bear against us.[22]

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Captain Samuel Pingree was awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroism at Dam No. 1.

Johnston disagreed. He criticized the Peninsula's defenses and believed Richmond was best defended nearer the capital. President Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War George Wythe Randolph, and General Robert E. Lee, however, wanted the Peninsula and Norfolk defended for several strategic reasons. Norfolk contained the Gosport Navy Yard and the C.S.S. *Virginia*, and the Peninsula was an invasion route to Richmond. Johnston countered that the contest was a matter of artillery and McClellan held the trump card.

For the remainder of the siege, McClellan kept his troops busy building roads, bringing up cannons and supplies, and completing the fifteen heavy artillery emplacements. Battery No. 1 mounted five 100-pound Parrott rifles and one 200-pound Parrott rifle. The Parrott rifles in Battery No. 1 drove off a Confederate supply ship on May 1, 1862. The grand barrage against the Confederate defenses was planned for May 5.

The Confederates, however, retreated during the night of May 3. Johnston, who had learned of the completion of the Union batteries, advised President Davis that it was pointless to occupy the Warwick-Yorktown line in the face of superior artillery, and ordered a withdrawal up the Peninsula toward Richmond. The Confederate artillery covered the nighttime retreat, and caused a little trepidation in the Union ranks but few casualties.

Francis Adams Donaldson of the 71st Pennsylvania described the bombardment:

> Last evening and pretty much all night they kept up a fearful artillery firing which, of course, is now understood to have been intended to conceal their preparations for leaving. There was also large fires to be seen from within their works during the night. Before daylight, however, this morning, our people discovered their retreat and our dear glorious old flag now waves where the rebel banner fluttered defiantly for so long a time.[23]

Artist and cartographer Robert Sneden recorded that "numerous shells bursting high in [the] air lit up the whole plateau and made a fine sight, while the flashes of the guns along the parapets added to the fine theatrical display."[24]

While their artillery fired off the remaining ammunition, the Confederates retreated up the Peninsula toward Williamsburg. On the morning of May 4, the Union troops occupied Yorktown and pursued the Confederate rearguard into the third defensive line, fourteen redoubts between College and Queens Creeks. Uncharacteristically, McClellan reacted swiftly to the Confederate withdrawal, and embarked Brigadier General William B. Franklin's division for a move up the York River to West Point to block the Confederate retreat. McClellan placed Brigadier General Edwin Vose Sumner in

Fifteen-year-old Private Julian Scott crossed the river several times under fire in order to rescue wounded comrades.

Private William Scott, the famous "sleeping sentinel," was mortally wounded as he crossed the river.

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command of the Federal pursuit, and sent him after Johnston's troops. The May 5 Battle of Williamsburg, fought in pouring rain, blunted the Union pursuit. James Longstreet's defense of the Williamsburg line saved the Confederate artillery and baggage train. Franklin's division failed to break out of their beachhead at Eltham's Landing, and the Confederates escaped toward Richmond unmolested. The subsequent Battle of Seven Pines and the Seven Days battles saw the emergence of Robert E. Lee as commander of the Army of Northern Virginia, and ended McClellan's Peninsula Campaign.

For several months after the Union capture of the Warwick-Yorktown line, topographical engineers surveyed the defenses and inventoried the captured heavy ordnance. Impressed by the intricate earthworks, the chief engineer of the Army of the Potomac reported: "Every kind of obstruction which the country offered, such as abatis, marsh, inundation was skillfully used. The line is certainly one of the most extensive known in modern times."[25]

McClellan had wasted almost an entire month preparing an elaborate siege against a smaller foe, and had lost valuable time that enabled the Confederate high command to prepare Richmond's defense. The young general had spared the Army of the Potomac the high casualties of the Crimean War, but doing so ultimately cost him his objective: the Confederate capital. Magruder had skillfully maneuvered his army and blocked the enemy's advance at Lee's Mill, while his chief subordinates had contained the Union breakthrough at Dam No. 1. Both battles were small, but they helped keep Union forces from reaching the outskirts of Richmond until the end of May. General McClellan's plans for a bloodless conclusion to the war were thrwarted, and the conflict raged for another three years. □

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NOTES:

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4. J.B. Magruder to S. Cooper, May 3, 1862, *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 11, Part I, p. 206.
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